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SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

[1](#)1. Goldstone Report

[1](#)2. Mideast

Key stories in the media:

The media reported that at the conclusion of their meetings yesterday, U.S. Special Envoy for Middle East Peace George Mitchell and PM Benjamin Netanyahu agreed to meet again tomorrow in a last

attempt to arrive at a formula that would permit the three way Israeli-PA-U.S. summit to take place. HaQaretz and other media reported that the U.S. is applying heavy pressure on Israel and the PA to bring about such a summit next week. Maariv reported that Israel is unhappy with the Arab statesQ normalization gestures and the PA is opposed to partial freezing of settlements. HaQaretz has learned that Vice President Joseph Biden called PM Netanyahu a week ago on the matter, asking that the PM soften his position and agree to a yearlong construction freeze in West Bank settlements so that PA President Mahmoud Abbas would agree to attend the summit meeting.

Yediot reported that the U.S. is losing its patience with Israel behind the scenes, blaming Netanyahu for the crisis and claiming that he exacerbated the situation by allowing the construction of 450 housing units in the territories, thus causing Arabs and Palestinians to toughen their stances.

All media highlighted Israeli responses to the scathing Goldstone Commission Report that accused Israel of having committed war crimes during Operation Cast Lead. Media reported that yesterday PM Netanyahu termed the report a Qprize for terroristsQ and a defeat for democratic countries trying to combat them. The Jerusalem Post reported that the PM will be speaking in the coming days to a list of prime ministers of countries represented on the U.N.Qs Human Rights Council, lobbying them to oppose any resolution adopting the findings of the report. The newspaper said that IsraelQs diplomatic efforts are now centered on convincing democratic countries not to approve the report. Leading media quoted Netanyahu and FM Avigdor Lieberman as saying that the commission, headed by South African Constitutional Court Judge Richard Goldstone, was a "kangaroo court" whose conclusions were drawn up before the hearings even started. HaQaretz reported that yesterday Netanyahu raised the issue with Special Envoy Mitchell. Yediot quoted Netanyahu as saying in private talks that the Goldstone report Qreturns to dark days in history.Q Media quoted President Shimon Peres as saying that the report Qmade fun of history.Q HaQaretz bannered remarks made by IDF Judge Advocate General Brig. Gen. Avichai Mandelblit in an interview with the newspaper denouncing the report and saying that it blatantly overstepped the commissionQs mandate. Israel Radio reported that two months ago the Israeli Foreign Ministry distributed 6,000 copies of the countryQs detailed investigative report about Operation Cast Lead to foreign leaders and opinion-makers, but that Goldstone ignored it. Goldstone was quoted as saying in an interview with Israel TV that Israel dismissed his report before reading it. Israel Radio reported that amidst signs of dissatisfaction among the U.S. Congress and administration, as State Department officials have expressed reservations about some clauses of the report, President Obama Qdoes not hurry to respond, perhaps as an oblique gesture against Israel.Q The radio reported that yesterday in New York Deputy FM Daniel Ayalon met with U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Susan Rice.

PM Netanyahu was quoted as saying in a Jewish New Year interview with Israel Hayom that Israel should patiently wait for a U.S. decision regarding the conclusion of the dialogue with Iran. Netanyahu was also quoted as saying that his mysterious disappearance abroad [to Russia] represented a very important action to Israel. DM Ehud Barak was quoted as saying in a pre-Jewish New Year interview with Yediot that Iran does not constitute a vital threat to Israel and that it is just a challenge that does not endanger the countryQs existence. Barak was quoted as saying that as long as North Korea has not been punished, the Iranians are drawing conclusions.

The Jerusalem Post quoted former Deputy DM Ephraim Sneh as saying yesterday, in an interview with Reuters, that Israel will be compelled to attack IranQs nuclear activities if Western powers do not impose serious sanctions against Tehran by the end of 2009.

Israel Radio reported that an unnamed Jordanian minister told Saudi newspaper A-Riyadh that relations between Israel and the Jordan were on the brink of crisis because of Israel's policy in the peace process. Syrian President Bashar Assad also criticized Israel last night and called it an imaginary partner. Israel Radio reported that Jordan is very troubled by excavations that Israel is carrying out in the Temple Mount area. The minister told the Saudi newspaper that Jordan will take various diplomatic steps against Israel particularly after King Abdullah, in his last meeting with Netanyahu, warned Israel against making Jerusalem more Jewish.

Maariv reported that President Peres has embarked on a campaign to combat hunger around the world. The newspaper reported that last month Peres proposed to Russian President Dmitry Medvedev cooperation in developing advanced strains of cereals that will increase agricultural production.

The Jerusalem Post reported that yesterday the IDF began removing 100 dirt and stone roadblocks in the West Bank, in an effort to make life easier for Palestinians. IDF sources were quoted as saying that the roadblocks would be gone by the end of the week.

Yesterday Israel Radio reported that on Monday 10 former IDF soldiers rescued a U.S. citizen and her two-and-a-half son from a Palestinian village in the Tulkarm area where they had been held captive for three years. The woman, who had married a young Palestinian man she met in the U.S., was being held in his house. Mother and son were taken to the U.S. Consulate-General in Jerusalem and departed for Ohio on Tuesday. Major media echoed the report.

All media quoted the GOIQs Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) as saying yesterday that Israel's population stands at 7,465,500. Jews number some 5,569,000, or 75.5% of the population; Arabs total 20.2%, or 1,488,000 people. The remainder, 4.3%, are classified as "other," and are mostly immigrants from the former Soviet Union who are not registered by the Interior Ministry as Jews. The population continues to grow 1.8 percent each year, and the CBS statistics show that Israel is still a fairly young nation, with nearly 30% of the people under the age of 14, compared to 17% in most Western countries. Only 9.7% of Israelis are older than 65, whereas in other Western countries the average is closer to 15%.

Israel Hayom, Channel 2-TV, Channel 10-TV, the Russian-language Channel 9-TV, and other media cited a U.S. Embassy-produced video featuring the QconfessionsQ of young, Israeli visa offenders. The recording, which appears on YouTube, focuses on the message: QThe price youQll pay if youQre caught is too high.Q Interviewed on the TV stations, an Embassy official said that the video is meant as a deterrent for would-be infringers of visa regulations.

Makor Rishon-Hatzofe reported that the High Court of Justice has rejected a Peace Now petition demanding that the right-wing non-profit organization Elad stop building at the QCity of David site in the East Jerusalem neighborhood of Silwan.

The Jerusalem Post quoted Israeli defense officials as saying this week that the Israeli Defense Ministry has told the Pentagon that the IAF may only purchase 20 Joint Strike Fighters -- and not 25 as planned -- if the price of the aircraft is significantly higher than \$100 million.

Media quoted IDF Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Gabi Ashkenazi as saying yesterday that witnesses brought to testify about IDF actions by the NGO Breaking the Silence have no immunity.

Maariv and Israel Radio reported that the Egyptian Journalists Association is calling to bring Hala Mustafa, a senior journalist of the newspaper Al-Ahram, to justice, accusing her of a Qnormalization contactQ with Israel -- hosting Israeli Ambassador Shalom Cohen in her office.

Yediot and other media reported that 200 students of the Islamic University of Constantine (Algeria) have enrolled in a new Hebrew-language curriculum.

Israel Radio reported that a U.S. soldier who immigrated to Israel as a child is imprisoned in Israel for desertion of Israeli army service. He claims to have given up his Israeli citizenship, prior to enlisting in the U.S. Army. The radio quoted a legal source in the IDF as saying that the case might lead to a diplomatic crisis between the two countries.

11. Goldstone Report:

Block Quotes:

II. "A Commission of Inquiry Is Needed"

The independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized (6/17): QThe report by the commission headed by Judge Richard Goldstone on Operation Cast Lead in Gaza is one of the most serious indictments ever made against the government and the military in Israel. The report states that during the operation Israel committed war crimes and significant violations of international law.... The cloud of Cast Lead will not dissipate on its own. Israel benefited from the decision to appoint a commission of inquiry following the Sabra and Chatila massacre that occurred during the first Lebanon war. Instead of a futile attempt to reject the report and undermine the legitimacy of the Goldstone Commission, the government would do better to establish a state commission of inquiry to thoroughly investigate the serious accusations that were placed this week on Israel's doorstep. Such a step could prevent a more severe entanglement.QII. "What More Should be Done to Resume the Negotiations?"

Veteran journalist and television anchor Dan Margalit wrote in the independent Israel Hayom (6/17): QNetanyahu is persevering with the Qtwo states for two peoplesQ principle. He has clarified [in a recent interview with Israel Hayom] that the Palestinians will be neither Israeli citizens nor subordinates. What more should be done to resume the dialogue?.... Lack of caution may make even one side break the cord; such things have already happened. Abu Mazen fled Jerusalem for Ramallah when he saw the map that Ehud Olmert showed d him Q including extreme concessions to the Palestinians, such as willingness to take in the descendants of the 1948 refugees. It was pathetic to see a former minister in his government demand yesterday on television a return to the point where negotiations had stopped. Ramallah already regrets the hasty rejection [of negotiations with Israel]. What is making Palestinian awareness harder is the report on Operation Cast Lead put out by the subservient Jew Richard Goldstone. Because of its ... phony contents, Israel will not give up beyond the outline presented in an interview granted even before the U.N. reportQs publication.

III. "GoldstoneQs Double Standard"

Senior commentator Ari Shavit wrote in Ha'aretz (6/17): QIt is not clear to this day if most of those who burned to death [next to two bombed oil tankers in Afghanistan] were Taliban warriors, as NATO first claimed, or innocent civilians who wanted to bring home a bit of oil. One way or another, it's clear that the United States and Germany are responsible for an extremely brutal attack.... If there are is such a thing as an international community, international law and universal ethics, they must seriously consider putting Obama on trial for his responsibility for severe war crimes. Absurd? Yes, it's absurd. No sane person in the world believes that the United States, Russia, or China could be subjected to purist international law. The U.S. has killed thousands of innocent civilians in Iraq and Afghanistan and in the last few months encouraged Pakistan to make an extremely brutal military move in its Swat Valley. The U.S. was not required to account for it because everyone understands that this is the price of the terrible War on Terror.... Only in matters involving Israel, do international law and justice suddenly discover that they have teeth. Only when Israel is involved is the judgment administered out of context. Only Israel is required to uphold a moral standard no superpower or Middle Eastern state is required to uphold.

IV. "Goldstoned"

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (6/17): QNothing was impartial about the Goldstone panel.... Besides obviously rewarding terror, demonizing Israel and seeking to constrain Israel's capacity to protect itself, the Goldstone Commission displays contempt for Israel's judiciary. U.N. human rights frameworks were founded to combat abuses by rogue states and dictatorships, where autonomous legal systems are nonexistent. Israel's courts are renowned for their activism and independence, often provoking government displeasure. Yet the Goldstone report, while effectively giving Hamas a free pass, demands a Qindependent inquiry to assess whether the treatment by Israeli judicial

authorities of Palestinian and Jewish Israelis expressing dissent in connection with the offensive was discriminatory.Q Such wholesale bias leaves no room for fair evaluation of the IDF's own probes.... Israel knows that its survival depends on it continuing to act in the best interests of its own self-preservation, consistent with its own profound moral obligations. But the Goldstone phenomenon is not only a challenge to Israel. It underlines that any democracy, and most pertinently the U.S., can find itself prosecuted and judged by the cynical scales of the worst tyrannies.

IV. "WhatQs Worse than Denial?"

Far-left Palestinian affairs correspondent Amira Hass wrote in Ha'aretz (6/17): QThe Goldstone Commission's findings are in line with what anyone who didn't shut his or her eyes and ears to witness testimony already knows.... There is only thing worse than denial -- the admission that the IDF indeed acted as has been described, but that these actions are both normal and appropriate.

VI. QObsession

Conservative Op-Ed Page Editor Ben-Dror Yemini wrote in the popular, pluralist Maariv (6/17): QThe Goldstone report requires Israel to engage in soul-searching. It is not that the report reveals something new. Everything was foreseeable. Israel, for the millionth time, is being accused not only of war crimes, but now we are talking about crimes against humanity. Since Hamas and their supporters were the victims -- and they were indeed victims -- then the human rights organizations think that Hamas is Qhumanity.Q Woe is humanity if these are its representatives, because this is humanity whose official charter is the closest thing to the Nazi platform. This is humanity whose members declare that they will not settle for Israel -- they want Paris, Rome and Madrid. It is possible to refute most or all of the allegations appearing in the report.... But all this will not help, because the Qenlightened world has fallen in love with blaming Israel. The enlightened world, just like in the past, tends to think that if Israel would only be sacrificed, peace would be achieved. The enlightened world has fallen in love with an illusion. [But] facts will not confuse those who are seized by an obsession against the Jewish state.... After the first blow, for example, Israel could have declared a unilateral cease-fire, and dictated terms of surrender to Hamas. Hamas would have refused. Israel would have won legitimization. But no. Israel chose to continue an operation that did not achieve a thing. So yes, the Israeli government is to blame. We should wake up, because Israel's delegitimization is becoming an existential problem.

VII. QVenom and Destruction

Settler leader Israel Harel wrote in HaQaretz (6/17): QAs a result of the destructive, toxic report of the United NationsQ Goldstone Commission, from now on all of the haters of Israel will be celebrating anti-Semites. And the UN -- he imposer of peace on the world -- provided especially catchy, volatile, flammable fuel for them to throw on the fire. Oppressive regimes and terrorist organizations are again finding that no international charges will ever be brought against them -- never against them.

12. Mideast:

Block Quotes:

I. "Make Use of Palestinian Obduracy"

The ultra-Orthodox HamodiQa editorialized (6/17): QWill the White House publish a diplomatically formulated announcement pointing a finger at the Palestinians for preventing any possibility of resuming a dialogue with Israel? The U.S. is demonstrating a strong position against Israel, and Barack Obama would not fight with the Arab world and the Muslim religion in his first year in power. Abu Mazen understands this, too, and demonstrates his professional pride. He knows he enjoys a cover in his absolute refusal to meet with Netanyahu Q in line with the U.S. PresidentQs wishes --as long as there is no explicit Israeli commitment to totally cease all

construction in territory beyond the Green Line.

II. QIf Abu Mazen Wants"

Former Meretz Knesset Member Avshalom Vilan and Maurice Stroun, a researcher in biochemistry at the University of Geneva, wrote in the popular, pluralist Maariv (6/17): QThe cynical use made of the refugee issue by Arab leaders over the generations continues to obstruct attempts to reach a real peace. In light of the fact that a window to peace has once again been opened in the form of a new U.S. peace initiative -- which will presumably be based mainly on the Clinton initiative from 2000, the Arab peace initiative and additional proposals by the U.S. administration from 2000 until today -- the two sides have to lower their flags, with their symbols and declarations, to half mast. Despite the political difficulty this entails, it is the only chance of reaching a political arrangement that the two sides can live with, and not only die for.

CUNNINGHAM